

No More Walls

The man known as Kent, who died so he might live. Here is the story that the papers did not carry

By Will F. Jenkins

ILLUSTRATED BY GEORGE HOWE



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A MAN came down the valley, and Kent straightened up from the weeding of his tomato vines to watch him. He always watched, and there was always a faint constriction in his chest until an approaching figure was identified. There were times when he almost wondered whether he had chosen this place because of the sky above it, or because he could see anyone who came, a long way off. But he knew it was the sky. There was a feeling of vastness, of a tremendous open space, here. The earth was like a springboard for a man's perceptions, so that always his eyes lifted to the blue with its tufts of white cloud above him. Kent could not doubt long that he had chosen this place because of its nearness to the sky. He was done with closed places forever—if God was good.

The man down the valley was on a horse which plodded along without haste, its head moving up and down. It was climbing. Kent could not see the man clearly, as yet. The constriction in his chest grew greater. His eyes seemed to blur.

Then they cleared suddenly. The man was the sheriff, Kent's old neighbor and good friend, who had no faintest suspicion that Kent had ever been behind walls that were designed to keep him captive.

The constricted feeling eased, but Kent had that momentary weakness of the knees which always followed it. He bent down again to his tomato vines.

The hoofs of the sheriff's horse clinked upon stone. It was nearer. The sheriff's hat showed above a near-by hill-crest. His body. The horse heaved up into view and the sheriff waved his hand.

"Lo, Kent."

"Morning, Bob," said Kent. He straightened up and eased his back. "Climb down and visit a while."

"Can't do it today," said the sheriff. He frowned suddenly. "Look here, Kent. I came up 'specially to ask you. Do you know anybody name of Sawyer?"

Kent felt the constricted feeling in his chest again. He did not know anybody named Sawyer. But to be questioned about anything caused that horrible sensation.

"Why, no, Bob. Can't say that I do. Why?"

THE sheriff poked at the tobacco in his pipe. He was disturbed.

"Two fellas were in town today askin' about you. Name of Sawyer, one of 'em said. Seemed to know you real well. He was short an' freckled an' red-headed, with—uh—a kinda shifty eye. I didn't take to him, Kent. Not a bit."

"Nope, I don't know him," Kent said carefully. "Can't you light and set?"

He managed a grin. The sheriff shook his head.

"No. I got to get goin'. I thought I'd ask you about those fellas. I got to—uh—see if I can pick 'em up again."

"What's the matter?"

"Why—uh—that redheaded fella's face looked familiar, so I hunted around. An' I found his picture."

"Well?"

"His real name," said the sheriff, poking at his pipe, "ain't Sawyer. He's been in a bunch of jails, it seems like, an' he's wanted again. Y'sure you can't even guess why he was askin' for you? Y'don't know him?"

"No, Bob. I don't." But Kent's whole chest was an agony.

"Funny," said the sheriff unhappily. "He sure seemed to know all about you, Kent. Even about you winnin' a school prize for your handwritin', when y'were a kid. All right. I'll be gettin' along. I thought I'd ask you though. S'long."

He turned his horse and rode off. And Kent tried to keep on with the task of weeding his tomato plants. But he could not. He sat down weakly and looked

out at the vast, empty space all about him. His own valley ran nearly two miles between gradually deepening walls before it gave upon the larger one. And that other valley's width could be measured in other miles, and beyond it were peaks and mountains which stretched on past imagining. There was space here. There were no walls anywhere; no walls that could not be climbed; no walls with guards on top; no walls to limit the space to which his eyes could reach out and his body follow. He could pick up his hat and take the stick leaning against the door and walk, and walk, and walk, and always he could go farther.

But there was this man who'd asked about him. Sawyer? Redheaded and freckled, with a shifty eye? He was Val Downy. He'd been Kent's cellmate for a while, and Kent had heard his boastings—which were not pleasant. He looked to be paroled. But Kent had come to know that he would go mad in prison, and he had made his escape by what—looking back—seemed almost maniacal cunning. And Val Downy was here looking for him, and he was already wanted for crimes committed since his release, and his quest for Kent.

THE sheriff and his horse went out of sight. Away beyond his own valley Kent saw smoke rising lazily from the chimney of a house six miles away. He could look beyond. Ten. Twenty. More than that many miles. And there was not a single wall or bolt or bar to hold him back if he should choose to walk and walk and walk.

A long time later, Kent bent to his work. He labored all the rest of the afternoon. But he looked down his own valley more than once. And twice—familiar as the outlook was—his chest felt as if it were squeezed empty of breath. He thought he saw someone coming toward him, only to discover that what he had taken for heads were stones. But no one came.

Val Downy did not come until an hour after sunset.

It was almost dark. Kent ate his supper without a light, looking out of the wide windows he had upon every side of his little house. It was not possible for him to be at ease where he could not look for a long distance. He had looked upon walls and bolts and bars for much too long a time. He ate, and rested his eyes upon the dim outlines of the mountains against the horizon.

Then, quite suddenly, a voice said:

"Stick 'em up, pal! You got company!"

Something pressed against the back of his neck. Something hard and cold. He froze. Hands felt over his body. Somebody took his revolver.

Kent said carefully: "Hello, Val. I heard you were down this way."

Val grunted. He came around in front of Kent and took a seat. He was short, and—Kent remembered, because it was dark inside the house—he was red-headed and his eyes were shifty. Kent remembered many things. His hands were tense on the table.

"Y'heard it, huh?" said Val. "Now, how'd you hear that?"

"The sheriff," said Kent. "He came up to tell me that somebody'd been asking about me. You stuck in his mind, Val. He hunted up your picture. Now he's trying to find you again."

Val grinned. "All right. I'll duck." He waved his hand. "Meet a old pal o' mine. Pete Shims. We came down to see you. We got some business."

"I've quit," said Kent.

Val Downy laughed.

"Uh-huh. I say that too. Pete, this guy's the best penman in the country. He just didn't know how to push over his stuff. He's on the lam from stir."

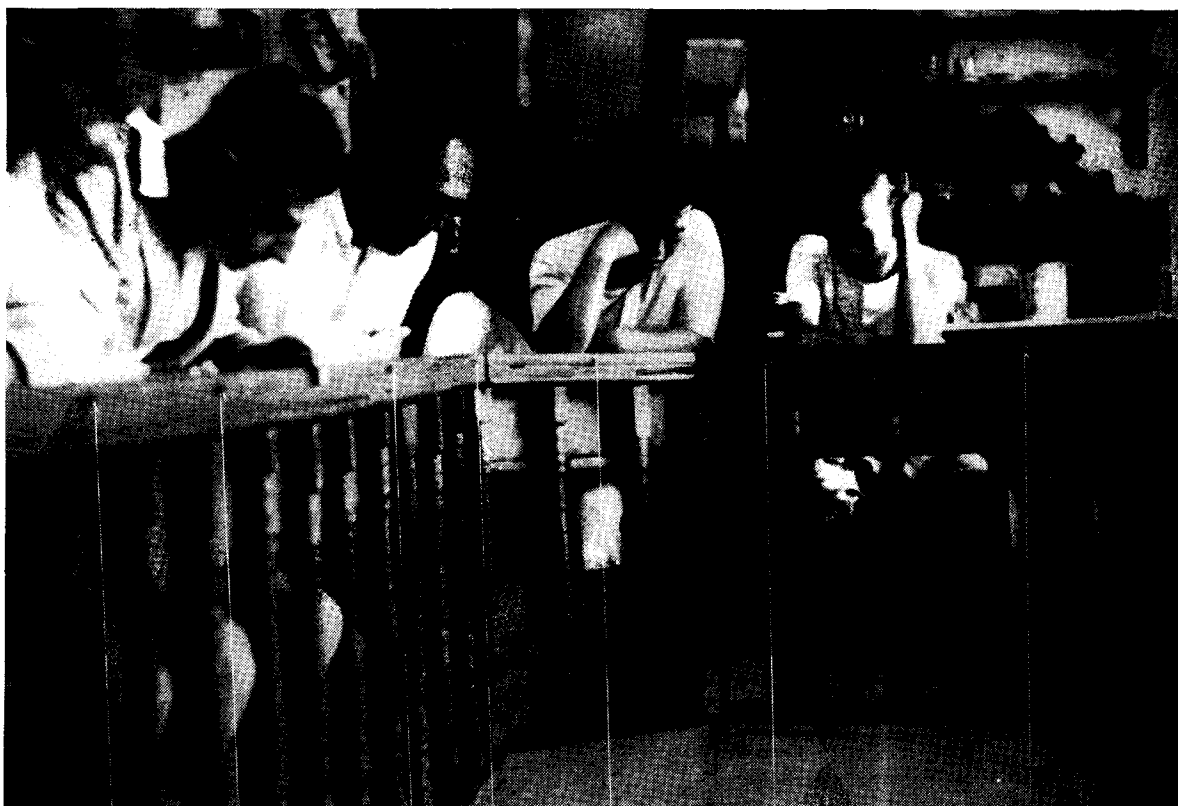
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Two to Macao

By Jim Marshall

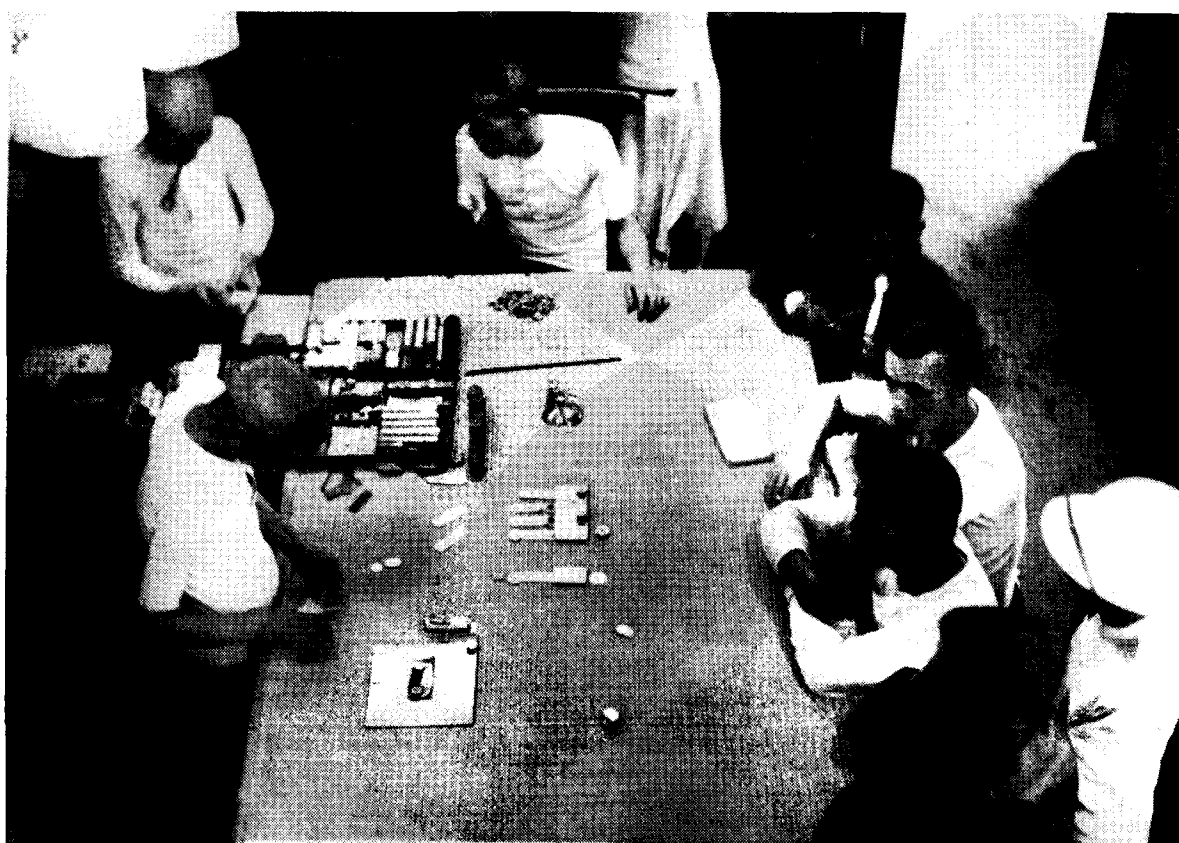
COLLIER'S STAFF WRITER IN THE ORIENT

Macao, the Portuguese city in China, is headquarters for exotic wickedness. She has had the reputation for years; nobody thought of questioning it. But now Pan American Clippers are dropping Americans there in droves, and the Americans are saying, "Show us." And Macao, put on her mettle, is going to do her level best



BLACK STAR

Macao derives most of its income from gambling in various forms, fan-tan games being most popular. Below is one in operation. Above, higher-stake players lower their bets to the table below in baskets



Chinese lottery tickets are offered for sale every few feet along Macao's principal streets

A CENTURY ago American seamen looked down on it from the skys'1 yards of the tea clippers, seven months out from New York around the Horn. This summer, American tourists are looking down on it from the cabins of the air clippers—less than seven days out of Manhattan. The tourists fly in on the last leg of the Pacific crossing from Alameda. Below, the rocky islands of the South China coast thrust up from a glassy sea. The junk fleets dip slowly on the leaden swell. The plane slides down the air inside the breakwater, churns up the muddy water of the Pearl River estuary and is warped to her pier.

This is the place the tourists have been waiting for. Manila is five hours behind them. Hong Kong's thirty minutes away. Hawaii was interesting. So were Midway and Wake and Guam. But this is the place. This is the Port Said of the Orient—the grand concentrated razzle-dazzle of exotic wickedness, where girls, gold, glamor and gambling abound. Where it's all high, wide and handsome and the hot blue sky is only halfway to the limit.

The landing stage still is America. So are the four red and white masts of the radio station, up on a shoulder of the hill. So is the diamond of the radio direction apparatus, on the summit. But along the shore and climbing high on the slopes are stone and concrete buildings of red and white and pink and green and blue and yellow. And they're distinctly not American. They're half Chinese and half Portuguese.

They're Macao.

Macao is the Asian end of the transpacific air service, the farthest outpost of American air routes. American clippers started flying the mail through from the Pacific Coast late in April, putting it into Canton, Hong Kong, Shanghai and Peiping a week out of New York. Before that, it used to take nearly a month. After the first mail flights came the passenger service.

The Chinese, centuries ago, called Macao Amagau for the goddess Ama, queen of heaven. The Portuguese, who own it today, slurred the name to Macau. The British call it Macao. The American tourists call it M'Cow and let it go at that. For years it's had a reputation as one of the wickedest towns on earth, putting to shame such boastful burghs as Paris, Panama, Rio, Shanghai and Bad, Bad Bodie.

They never take in the sidewalks of Macao.

Most visitors to the place still make the trip by the old steamer Kinshan from Hong Kong, forty miles northeast. They roll down the bund after breakfast in rickshas and toss Chinese dimes—value three and a third cents—at the sweating coolies. Then they shove through the native crowd onto the upper deck of the old coal-burner. The whole ship is cut up into sections by steel barriers so that it looks like a flock of zoo cages. The bridge is a steel fort, with loopholes for guns. The engine room is armor-plated.

Of course, the pirates from Bias Bay aren't going to seize the ship on the three-hour run to Macao—but when you pack 2,400 Chinese below decks and a couple of hundred whites above, anything may happen. So the tourists get a bit of a thrill out of the steel bars and the loopholes as the old ship goes steaming down through the islands, past the junk-crammed bays and through the massed sampan fleets. Junks dart across the bows—to cut off the trailing devils that follow in their (Continued on page 61)